

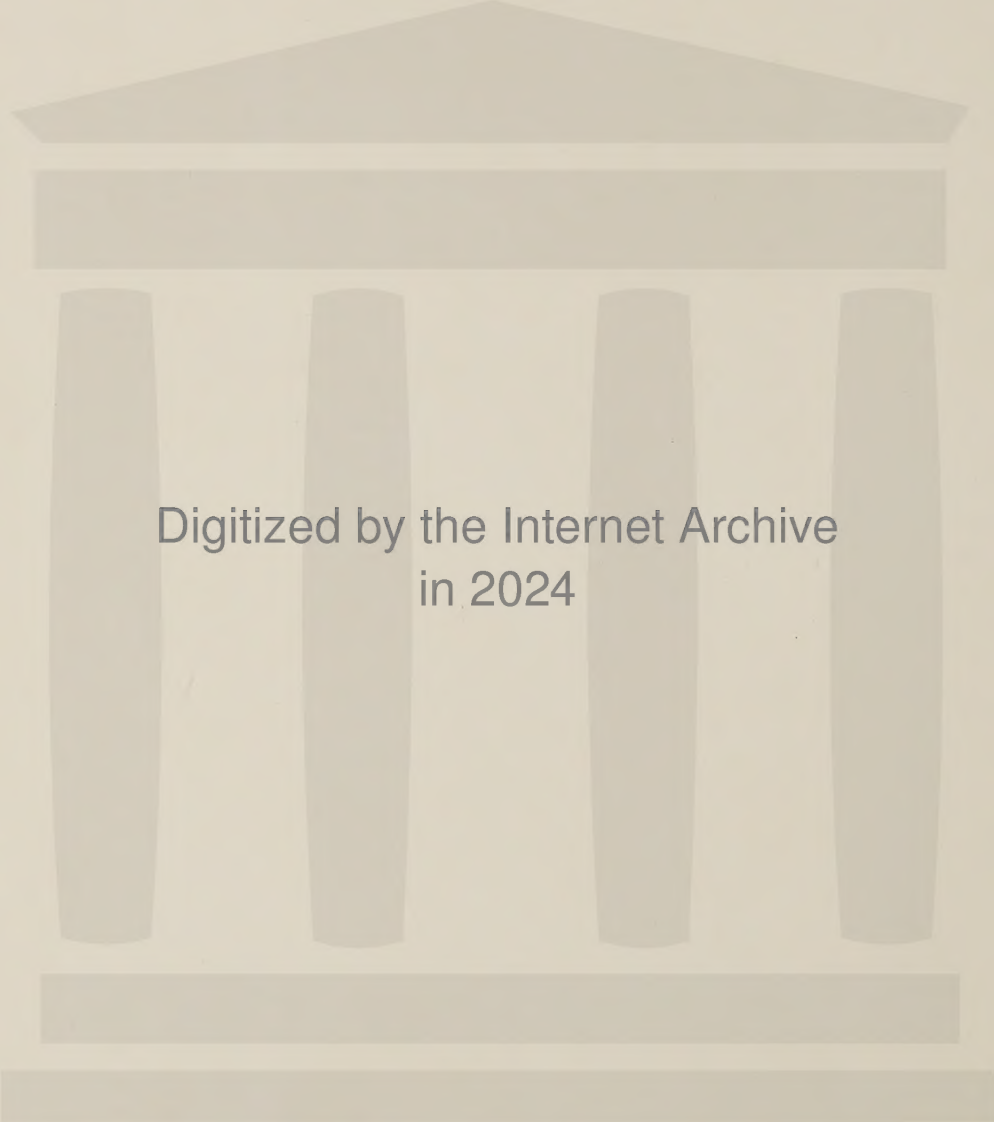
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ANIMAL FRIENDS OF THE SOUTHWEST



By Fran Hubbard

Illustrated by Bob Hines



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WHY DO WE HAVE NATIONAL PARKS?

The park ranger smiled at the young people resting in the shade of the big tree. "Before we hike along let's talk for a while. Did you know that Yellowstone was the first national park in the world? Congress set it aside way back in 1872 to preserve the things that you are enjoying here now. Today there are more than 280 areas in the United States managed by the National Park Service. Many other countries in the world have followed our example and set aside natural and historic and recreational areas for their people to enjoy."

"With our expanding population and the need for more living space, places with fresh air and clean water are getting more scarce. It is important that we save enough of our land so that someday your children can enjoy the things which you're enjoying today."

"We call this 'Environmental Awareness.' All that means, really, is being conscious of what each one of us can do to make our world a better place in which to live. Parks are nice but you can't always live close to one. In the meantime why not look around your own neighborhood and homes for things that you can do. Maybe you can plant a tree or some flowers or maybe you and your friends can clean up the vacant lot next door. There can be a lot of beauty in a small place if it is clean and has something growing on it. Even flowers in a window box somehow make the world look better."

A boy interrupted to ask, "What's the difference between a national park and a national forest?" "That's easy", replied the ranger. "National parks are places set apart to be kept just as they are because they are important to our country. They usually are famous for some natural features like the deep, river-cut Grand Canyon or the beautiful stone trees of the Petrified Forest, or the spectacular Indian ruins of the Southwest. National parks are managed by the National Park Service of the Department of Interior. National forests are just as important as national parks but serve a different purpose. The U.S. Forest Service, under the Department of Agriculture manages them in such a way that the greatest amount of timber is produced, year after year. Timber is like any other crop and something we will always need."

Another boy asked, "Do you have bears here?"

"Sure do," answered the park ranger, "and lots of other kinds of animals, too."

"Well, could you tell us something about some of them — the big ones?"

The ranger pushed back his stiff-brimmed Stetson and said. "I'll be glad to. When you say 'big ones' you must mean mammals like the bear and buffalo and moose. But first of all, do you know what a mammal is? It's an animal with warm blood and a backbone. It has hair on its body and gives milk to its young."

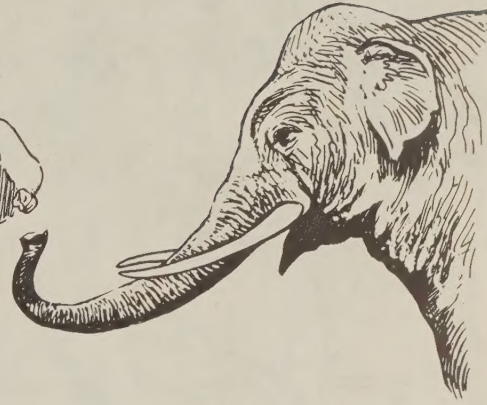
A mouse - -



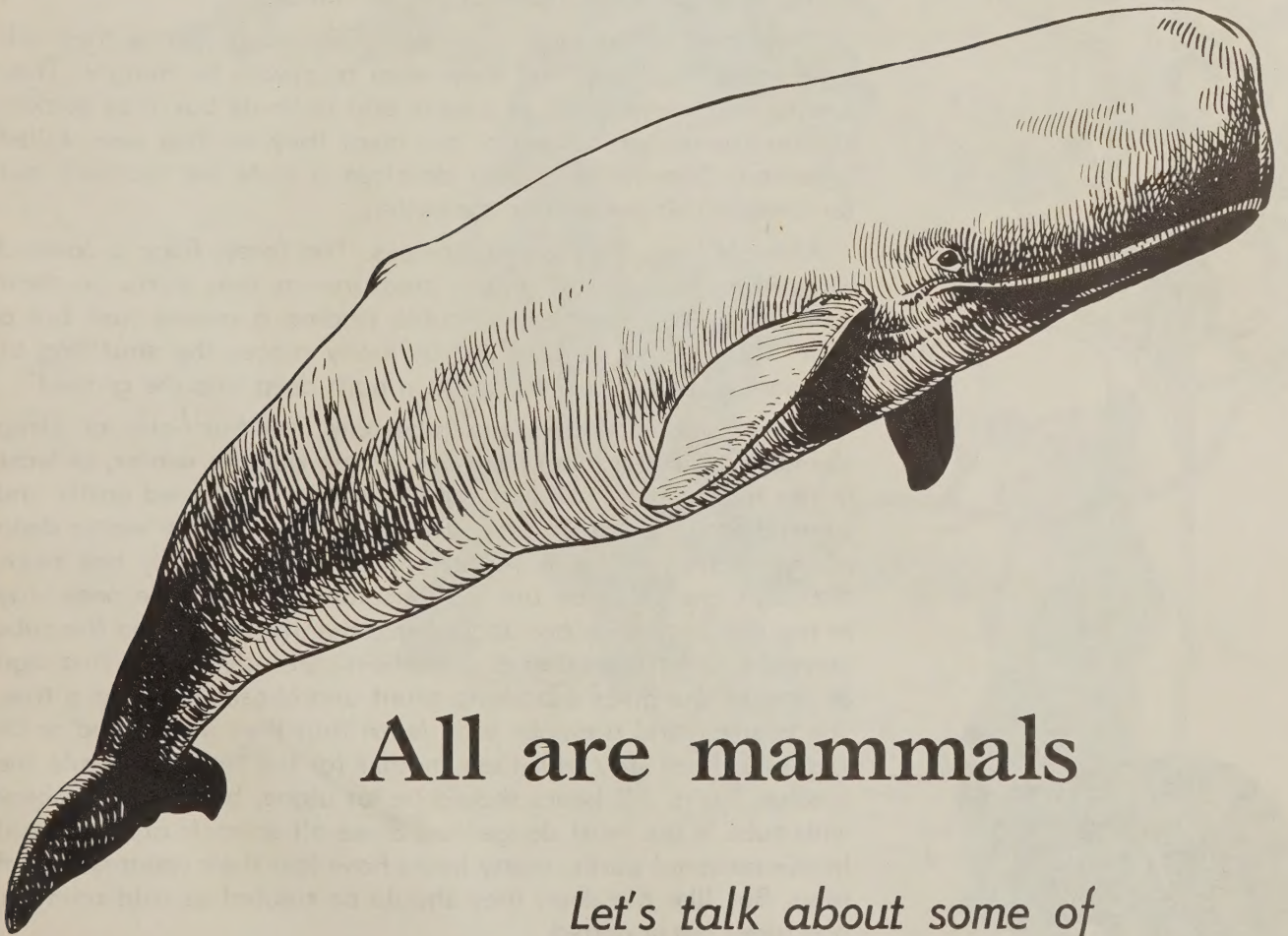
A man - -



An elephant - -



And even a whale - -



All are mammals

*Let's talk about some of
the mammals of the Southwest*

THE BLACK BEAR

Black bears are not always black. Just as people have hair of different colors, so it is with bears. They are most often brown, but many are black. Some are the color of straw and we call them "cinnamon bears." Black bears are quite common in the high forests of the Southwest. They usually weigh between 200 and 300 pounds, but some have been known to weigh 500!

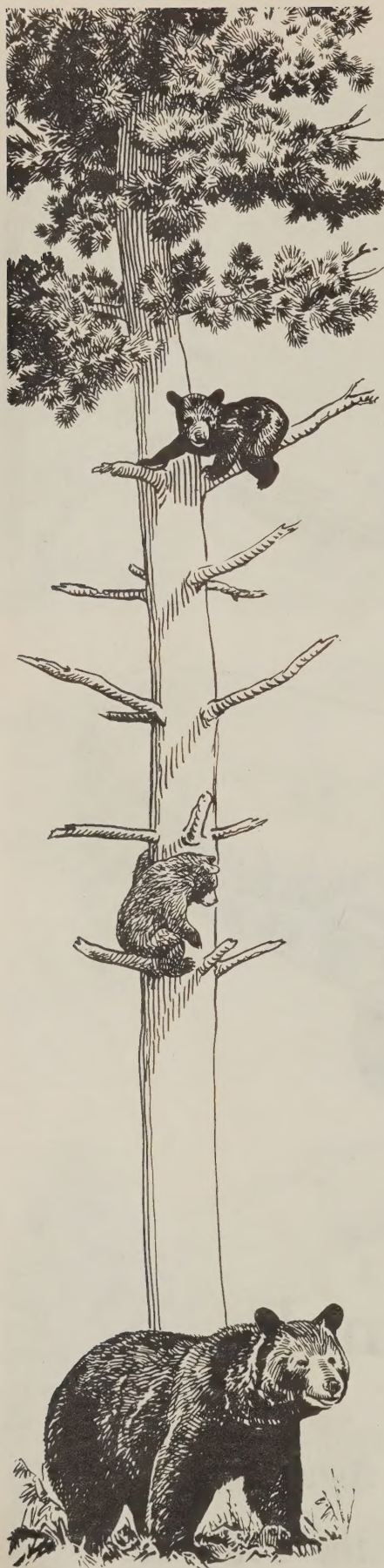
Bears usually travel with a clumsy, plodding walk, but when alarmed or angry they can move like greased lightning. Their tracks are easily recognized. Unlike the dog or cat, the front paws leave different tracks from the back ones. These animals are good climbers and often scramble up a tree when they are frightened. Instead of coming down head-first, bears back down. Their hearing and sense of smell are good, though their eyesight is poor.

Bears are so big that they have few natural enemies. Of course they try to avoid skunks and porcupines, but once in a while a young bear gets porcupine quills in himself.

Bears are omnivorous, (om-niv-or-us) which means they will eat almost anything, and they seem to always be hungry. They like to eat many kinds of plants and animals but they seldom kill for themselves. Much of the meat they eat has been killed by others. Sometimes a bear develops a taste for livestock but fortunately this does not happen often.

Animals have their own highways. The forest floor is covered with paths made by different creatures as they carry on their daily lives. You may have trouble finding a mouse trail but a bear trail is easy to identify. In many places the shuffling of thousands of bear feet has worn a path deep into the ground.

Many people think bears hibernate, (hy-bur-nate, or sleep soundly) all winter. They do have a long sleep in winter, at least in the higher mountains, but they may be awakened easily and sometimes come out to hunt for food. It is during the winter sleep of the mother that the young are born. She usually has twins although one or three are not uncommon. The little ones stay in the den until they are about three months old. When the cubs leave the den the mother guards them carefully. At the first sign of danger she gives a barking grunt and chases them up a tree. She is strict and the cubs soon learn that they must mind or be spanked. They stay with their mother for the first year while she teaches them. All bears should be let alone, but a mother bear with cubs is the most dangerous. Since all animals are protected in our national parks, many bears have lost their natural fear of man. But like the deer, they should be treated as wild animals, and never fed or petted.







THE MULE DEER

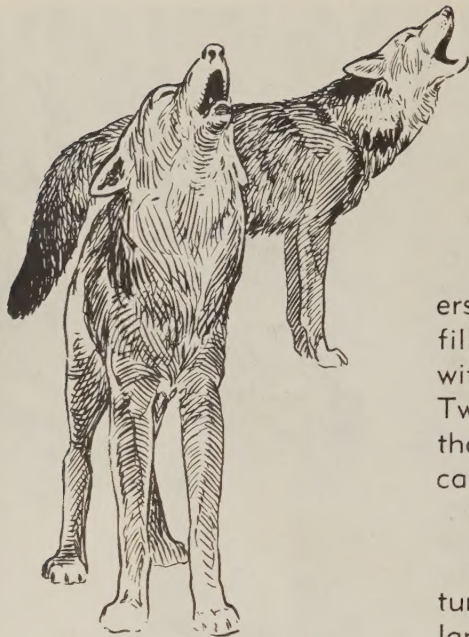
One of the most beautiful of our mammals in the Southwest is the mule deer. He was named for his large, mule-like ears. They are always in motion. When he is alarmed they are erect and forward, facing the possible danger. When he is angry his ears are flattened sideways. When he is hiding they are sometimes laid back against his neck.

The babies, called fawns, are born in late May and early June. Often there are twins or even triplets. The mother doe hides the fawns to keep them safe. They know that they must not move until she calls them. Their reddish coat with its white spots blends well with the forest thickets. This is called "protective coloration" and is their only defense during the first weeks of their lives. If you find a fawn that is hidden do not touch it. Its mother has not forgotten it. If you give it a human smell from your hands you will make it easier for some animal enemy to find it. By the time they are about four months old many of the fawns lose their spots and no longer require their mothers' milk.

Deer are browsers. This means that much of their food is made up of twigs, buds, and leaves. They are also fond of grass. Because of danger from mountain lions and other enemies the deer gobble their food quickly into a special part of the stomach. Then they chew it later in some safe place, the same way a cow chews its cud.

The male deer, called a "buck" grows antlers. His antlers are not like the horns of cattle, because they are shed each winter and a new set grown in the spring. Bucks use their antlers for fighting during the mating season. Once they drop off, discarded antlers form an important source of bone-building food for the small creatures of the forest. Next to man, the mountain lion is the greatest enemy of the deer. Deer can run swiftly for speed is their main protection from enemies. Coyotes and bobcats will sometimes hunt them too. Mother deer show great bravery when their fawns are in danger. They will even charge full-grown coyotes and make them run. Tame and friendly as the deer may seem in our national parks you must remember they are still wild animals. Their front hoofs are sharp and they strike swiftly and without warning. Visitors who don't understand about wild animals are injured every year while feeding and petting deer. They feed the deer things they shouldn't eat, and this of course makes them sick. It's fun to watch the deer from a safe distance, but only a greenhorn tries to feed and pet them.





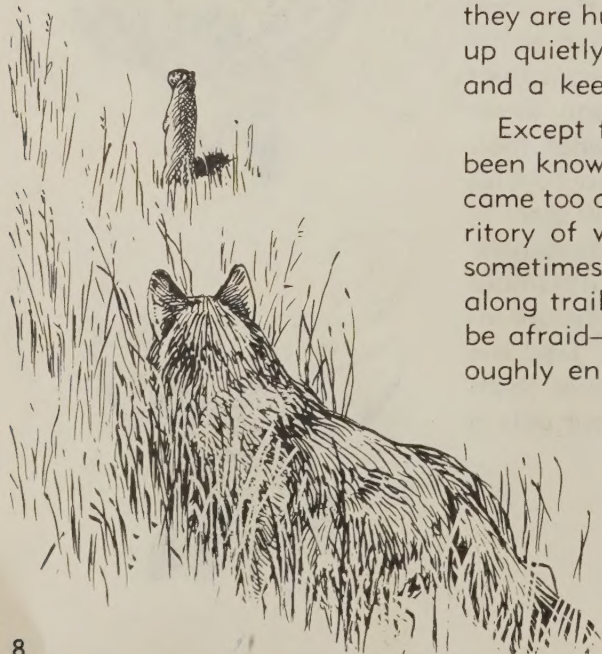
THE COYOTE

Have you ever heard a coyote sing? Coyotes are great singers. In the mountains or on the desert they may often be heard, filling the air with their strange music. The song often starts with a series of short barks followed by a long, mournful howl. Two or three coyotes can sound like twenty. Naturalists believe that they not only enjoy their song, but also use it as a means of calling and signalling to one another.

Their tracks look like a dog's with the toenails showing.

Coyotes like variety in their dens. Sometimes they dig long tunnels with many branches and rooms. Other times they enlarge a hole made by some other digging animal. A cave among the rocks may be used for a home. One coyote family may have different dens—one for daytime naps, one or more for nurseries, and one for the father coyote when the mother is taking care of the pups. As they grow older, the pups dig little burrows of their own in the sides of the main den. There usually are about six young in a litter, born in April or May. Though their eyes are closed and they are helpless when they are born, coyote puppies develop quickly. At an early age they learn to hunt for themselves. By the time they are six months old they are as big as their parents and are on their own. Coyotes eat hundreds of thousands of rodents each year, including ground squirrels, mice, and gophers. Sometimes one learns to like chickens or sheep but many ranchers protect them because they keep their pastures free of ground squirrels and other destructive animals. These wild dogs are crafty hunters. Two will sometimes work together. One trots out in plain sight to attract attention of the animal they are hunting while the second, which has kept hidden, sneaks up quietly from behind. They have sharp eyes, good hearing, and a keen sense of smell. All of these help them in hunting.

Except for man, coyotes have few enemies. Mother deer have been known to charge and strike them with their hoofs when they came too close to their fawns, and coyotes that live within the territory of wolves may be chased down and killed. Coyotes may sometimes be seen hunting in mountain meadows or trotting along trails in the forest. If you should hear them howling don't be afraid—remember that they are really singing and are thoroughly enjoying themselves!





THE MOUNTAIN LION



Probably the most misunderstood mammal in our country is the lion. These big cats range from Canada to South America but are seldom seen. They have a great fear of man, so men have little reason to be afraid of them. They have seldom been known to attack people. Lions are carnivores (remember that word?—"meat-eaters") and they like deer best. But they will eat bobcats, raccoons, and even skunks. In some cases where lions have become cattle killers, it was found that they were old or crippled and could not catch their natural food.



In many ways mountain lions are like big, overgrown housecats. Their tracks are similar though many times larger, and they can move as silently. When hunting, one may creep along with his belly almost scraping the ground, or he may crouch, motionless except for a twitching of the end of his long tail. These cats have a variety of names. They have been called "panther," "cougar," "catamount," "painter," and "puma," but the name "mountain lion" probably describes them best.

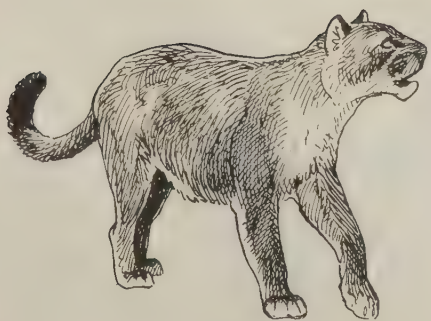
For a den the mother lion often chooses a cave among the rocks. This makes a good home for the babies. Her two or three kittens are usually born in the springtime, but they may come at any season. The little ones have black spots on their yellow-brown coats and black stripes on the tops of their long tails. As they become older, longer fur grows in and covers the baby spots. By the time they are a year old they take on either the reddish-brown or the grayish-brown of their parents. Like all kittens, baby mountain lions are playful and the mother often romps with them.

Except for man, the mountain lion apparently has few enemies. Sometimes he bothers a porcupine and gets some quills that become infected.

These cats are quiet, but they may utter a low growl, a hiss, or make a high, whistling sound. You may have heard stories about the scream of the mountain lion. Naturalists who have studied them believe that most of the screams are actually made by other animals.

Mountain lions play an important part in nature. By feeding on deer they prevent the deer from becoming too numerous. You aren't likely to see a mountain lion in the wild. But it is good to know that in the national parks they are protected. Now they will not become extinct (ek-stinkt — that means "gone forever") as they have over much of their original range.

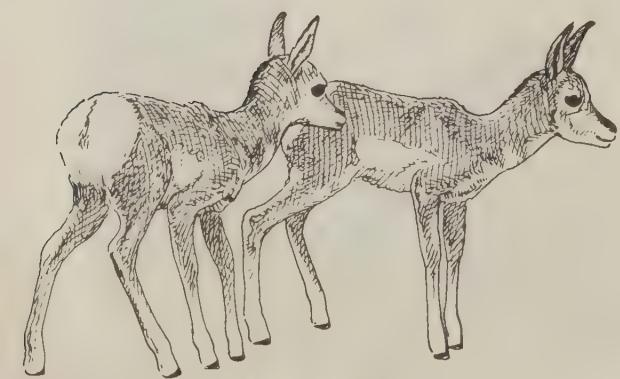






THE ANTELOPE

The graceful antelope, or pronghorn, is one of the fastest animals in the world. They may travel for short distances at speeds up to 60 miles an hour! Curiosity has caused the death of many. Hunters learned that a rag or handkerchief tied on a gun barrel and waved would attract the pronghorns within range of their rifles! Fawns develop more quickly than young deer. Often they can run with their mothers when they are only three or four days old. Antelope have an unusual way of signalling danger. They can make the white hairs of their rump patches stand on end. This makes a brilliant white flash which can be seen for long distances.





THE DESERT BIGHORN

The bighorn sheep of the desert has learned how to survive in a difficult land. He knows where to find waterholes or, if there is no water, which plants, such as some kinds of cactuses he can break open to get moisture. Bighorns are at home in rocky places, and their hooves are curved in on the bottoms, like suction cups. These give them a better grip on the rocks and make it possible for them to travel rapidly in dangerous country—bounding from rock to rocky ledge with apparently no fear of falling. Both the rams and the ewes (you-s) have curved horns. The ram's horns are used for fighting. During the mating season the rams butt heads into one another until one decides he has had enough and leaves the battle. The bighorn has many enemies; the worst one is man. Often a flock is led by an old ewe who knows all the good places to hide and where the tastiest food may be found. She knows where the sweetest streams are and she will stand guard while the others drink. Most important of all, she knows the best routes of escape. If the flock happens upon an enemy or encounters some other kind of danger, they follow her, their strong legs taking them zig-zagging on "sheep-ladders"—jumping from rock to rock up to the mountain peaks or down the steep cliffsides.





THE ELK

Elk are rare in the Southwest, but if you are lucky you might see one in the high meadows or pine forests. Its Indian name is Wapiti (wah-pee-tee). Next to the moose the elk is the largest of the deer family. The males, or bulls, sometimes weight 800 pounds and may be five feet high at the shoulder. Only the bulls have antlers, and they make good use of them during the autumn mating season. They are always ready to challenge one another to a duel, and the air rings with the clatter of colliding antlers as the bulls run at one another. They are seldom badly hurt, and all the commotion is for the purpose of winning cows, as the females are called, for their harems. In winter the antlers are shed and a new set grows the next year. The elk calves are born in May or June. Usually there is only one to a mother but sometimes twins or even triplets are born. The calf has white spots and looks much like a mule deer fawn except that he is larger and lighter in color. Like the fawn he will "freeze" and remain hidden from such prowlers as the coyote and the bear. For the first month or so the calf lives on his mother's milk, but by the end of summer he eats plants, just like his parents, and he has lost most of his spots.

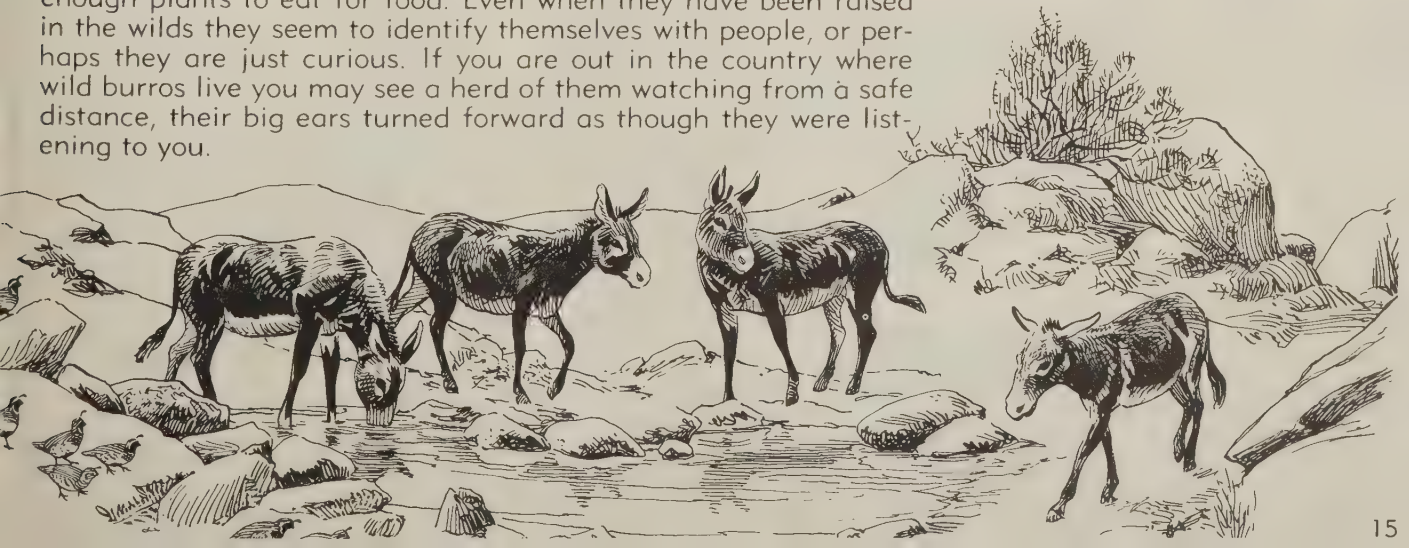




THE BURRO

There are few animals that have more appeal than the sure-footed little burro, man's companion and beast of burden since Biblical Times. Many are still used for riding and pack animals in the Holy Land, and in Mexico and other countries South of the Border. Occasionally they still are the companions of prospectors in the desert areas of this country, but most of them have been replaced by the jeep! Burros are sturdy and strong and when tame they can carry heavy loads. They can be ridden, but instead of sitting in the middle of their backs, as you would when riding a horse, it is best to sit far back, over the hind legs, because they can support more weight there.

Some of these cousins of the horse have been turned loose by their owners or have escaped into the wilds and have started families of their own. They are intelligent and know how to take care of themselves. Even in rough, desert country they can find enough plants to eat for food. Even when they have been raised in the wilds they seem to identify themselves with people, or perhaps they are just curious. If you are out in the country where wild burros live you may see a herd of them watching from a safe distance, their big ears turned forward as though they were listening to you.



Have you wondered what animals do

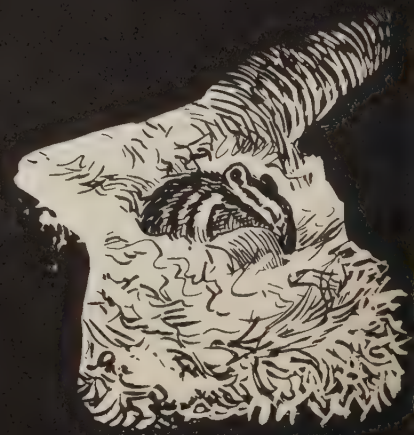


The beaver places green twigs in the water near his lodge, so he will have food when snow covers everything.

Some bats migrate to warmer areas and avoid winter weather, but most hibernate in cold regions.

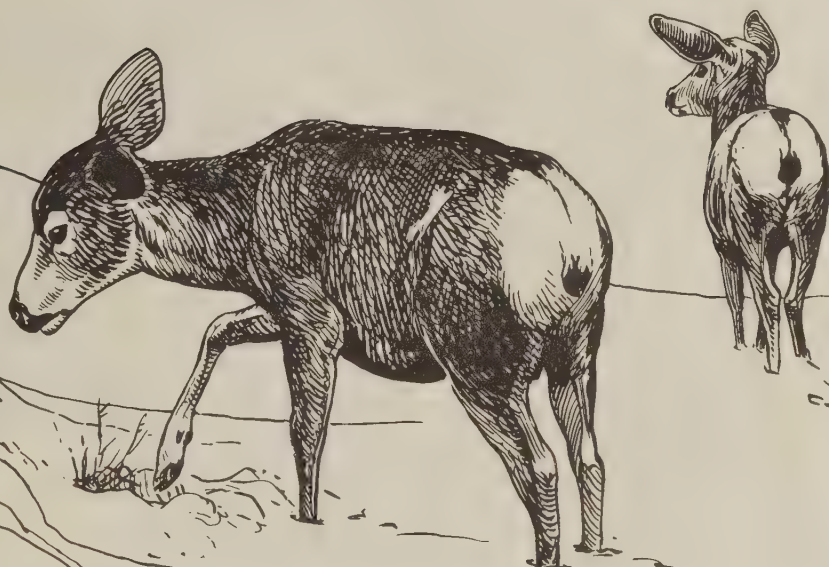


Bears don't really hibernate. They sleep during the winter but awaken easily if something disturbs them.




When the winds grow cold the chipmunk curls up in his warm nest to sleep until the spring sunshine wakes him.

WHEN WINTER COMES



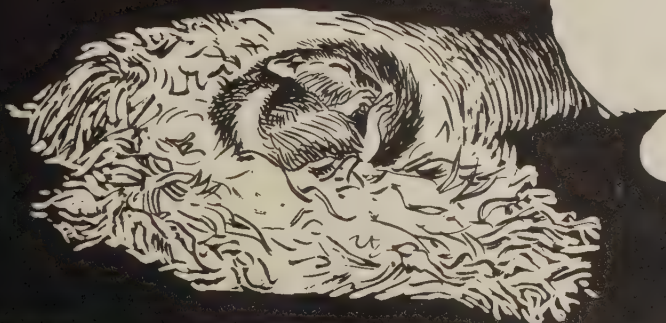
Many deer move to lower and warmer elevations when snow covers their feeding grounds. Those that remain often have to paw through deep snow to find food.



The weasel sheds his brown coat and becomes pure white "ermine" except for the tip of his tail.



The large feet of the snowshoe hare are useful in soft snow, and his winter coat helps him hide.



The golden-mantled ground squirrel crawls into his snug burrow among the rocks and sleeps, living on the fat which he stored during the summer.



THE BEAVER

The beaver is found in many parts of North America. His most interesting feature is his scaly, flat tail. It not only helps him steer when he is swimming but by slapping it on the surface of the water he sounds the alarm of an enemy's approach. When he stands on his hind legs to gnaw a tree he uses his tail as a brace. He is an expert swimmer and like all good swimmers he makes no noise. To help him swim the toes of his hind feet are webbed like a duck's.

The largest rodent in North America, the beaver often weighs more than 40 pounds. Rodent's front teeth are not like ours. They continue to grow as they are worn down. Even if a tooth is broken it grows back within a few days. This is important to the beaver for his teeth are his tools and without them he would die.

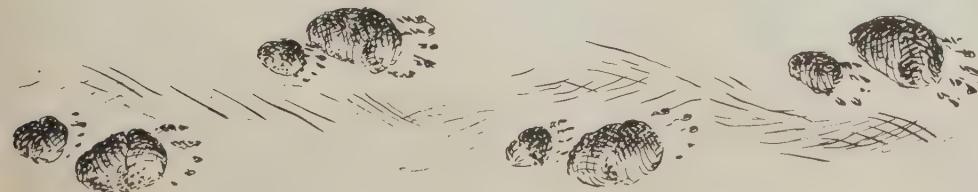
In early days our West was explored by trappers searching for beaver pelts (fur). The beaver has beautiful, soft, thick fur because he spends his life in the water. The beavers build most of their dams at night, to form ponds deep enough to hide the underwater entrances to their homes in the streambanks. They make them of trees and branches cut on the stream's edge. Water in the ponds soaks into the earth, keeping the meadows green.





THE PORCUPINE

The porcupine is just about the most unsociable creature in the woods. He feels so safe, with his large supply of sharp quills, that he ignores everyone about him. Through the ages these quills have developed from hairs. On his head they are about an inch long and on his back they grow to four inches. When danger is near he puffs himself up until he is almost twice his normal size. This makes his quills stick straight out from his body. He doesn't really throw his quills as many people think he does. He lashes his prickly tail back and forth, striking at the enemy. Each quill has a sharp point and hundreds of tiny barbs which make it work farther into the victim. With this kind of ammunition it's no wonder that the other animals stay out of his way! The porcupine doesn't hibernate in winter, although he often lives in snow country. He is herbivorous (er-biv-or-us) which means he eats plants, and he feeds and travels both in the daytime and at night. His big appetite often makes him do damage. Trees are sometimes killed when he eats too much of their tender, inner bark. Tools are also damaged when he eats the wooden handles, perhaps for the salt flavor. Slow-moving porky has a reputation for being stupid, but he is useful to have in the forest. People lost and without food have been able to save their lives by killing and eating porcupines.





TASSEL-EARED SQUIRRELS

The tassel-ear squirrels are the most regal members of the tree squirrel family. They move swiftly through the treetops of the yellow pine belt. If they are frightened they will "freeze", holding tightly to the top of a branch and remain motionless in this position for long periods of time. They are sociable creatures; families or groups will often play together in a tree. The long tassels on their ears make these squirrels different from their relatives the gray squirrels. The Kaibab squirrel is found in only one place in the world—on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. It is darker underneath than the Abert Squirrel and its tail is all white. For nests these squirrels will often take over ones which have been made by birds, high up in the trees.



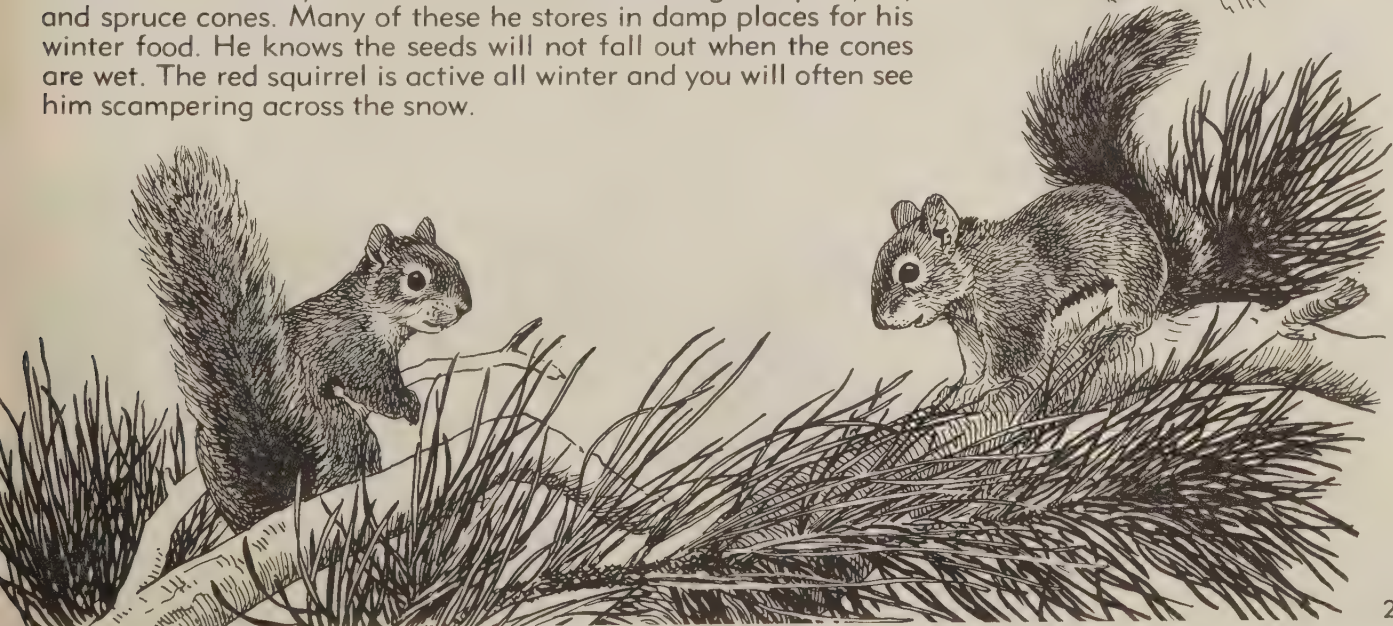


THE GRAY SQUIRREL

"Shadow-tail" describes the gray squirrel so well that it was chosen for one of his scientific names. His fluffy gray tail is as long as his body, and it is useful as well as beautiful. Much of his life spent in the trees so the tail helps balance while climbing and jumping from branch to branch. He is often a target for "dive-bombing" by acorn woodpeckers, and again the tail proves its usefulness—he protects himself by spreading it over his body. Acorns and seeds are among his favorite foods, and like the chipmunk he often burries them. The gray squirrel does not hibernate in winter, but when the weather is cold or stormy he stays in his warm nest high in the trees.

THE RED SQUIRREL

"Give him wings and he would outfly any bird in the woods." John Muir used these words to describe the little red squirrel, who is the clown of the forest. Never still a moment, he bounds from one tree to another, pausing only to scold some intruder with his shrill, chattering voice. It is not a good idea to walk under trees when he is at work, for he cuts down dozens of green pine, fir, and spruce cones. Many of these he stores in damp places for his winter food. He knows the seeds will not fall out when the cones are wet. The red squirrel is active all winter and you will often see him scampering across the snow.





THE ANTELOPE GROUND SQUIRREL

Sometime when you are traveling on a Southwestern road or hiking along a trail a small squirrel may scamper across in front of you, his light-colored tail held tightly over his back as though it might protect him. The flash of this white tail probably reminded some old-timer of the warning flash of an antelope's rump, and thus the squirrel got his name. The little rodent's movements are jerky and he is almost never still. Like his cousin the golden-mantled ground squirrel the antelope ground squirrel is a sun-lover, and once the sun goes down he'll go down too — into his burrow until morning.

GOLDEN-MANTLED GROUND SQUIRREL

The golden-mantled ground squirrel gets his name from the reddish-gold color of his head and shoulders. He is often mistaken for a chipmunk because of his stripes. If you look closely, though, you will see that the stripes end at his shoulder. The chipmunk's stripes run to the end of his nose. He lives in the high mountains from 7,000 to 11,000 feet, usually digging a burrow among the rocks. He eats many kinds of food and after his stomach is full he will continue to cram food into the large pouches on the inside of each cheek. When snow covers the ground he curls up in his snug burrow to sleep all winter.





THE BUSHY-TAILED WOODRAT

"Pack rat" or "trade rat" are the names by which most of us know the woodrat. Shiny things catch his eye and he will often pack them away. If he is already carrying something he may drop it for the new treasure, which makes people say that he is "trading." Unlike the rats in cities, he has a bushy tail and his gray and white coat is neat and clean. Night time is when the woodrat hunts for food. His home is among the brush or in the rocks and is made of sticks with a grassy nest inside. Because he is always adding sticks to his house it becomes a real fortress. By the time his enemies dig into the nest the woodrat is far away.



THE CHIPMUNK

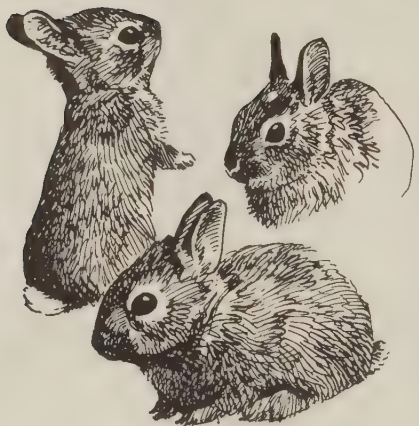
One of the busiest workers in the forest is the chipmunk. Although he sleeps about half of the year, he makes up for lost time in the summer. He is as much at home in trees as on the ground, and often makes a snug nest in the hollow of a tree trunk. If you come too close to his home he will scold loudly. Up with the sun, he goes about collecting seeds and berries. What he doesn't eat is tucked away in the two cheek pouches. When these are full he digs a hole and buries the food for later use. Sometimes he forgets where he has hidden them and some of the seeds grow. Without knowing it the chipmunk is a conservationist, (con-sur-vay-shun-ist), helping replant the forest.





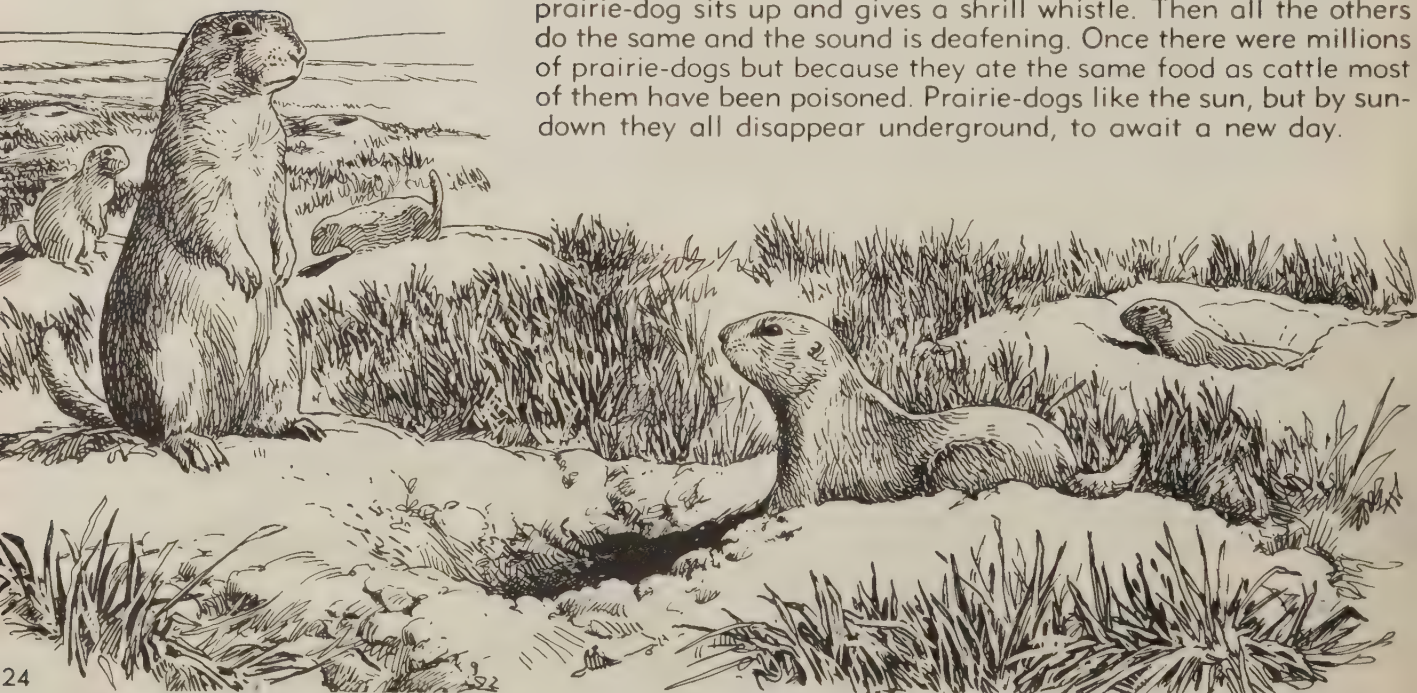
THE COTTONTAIL RABBIT

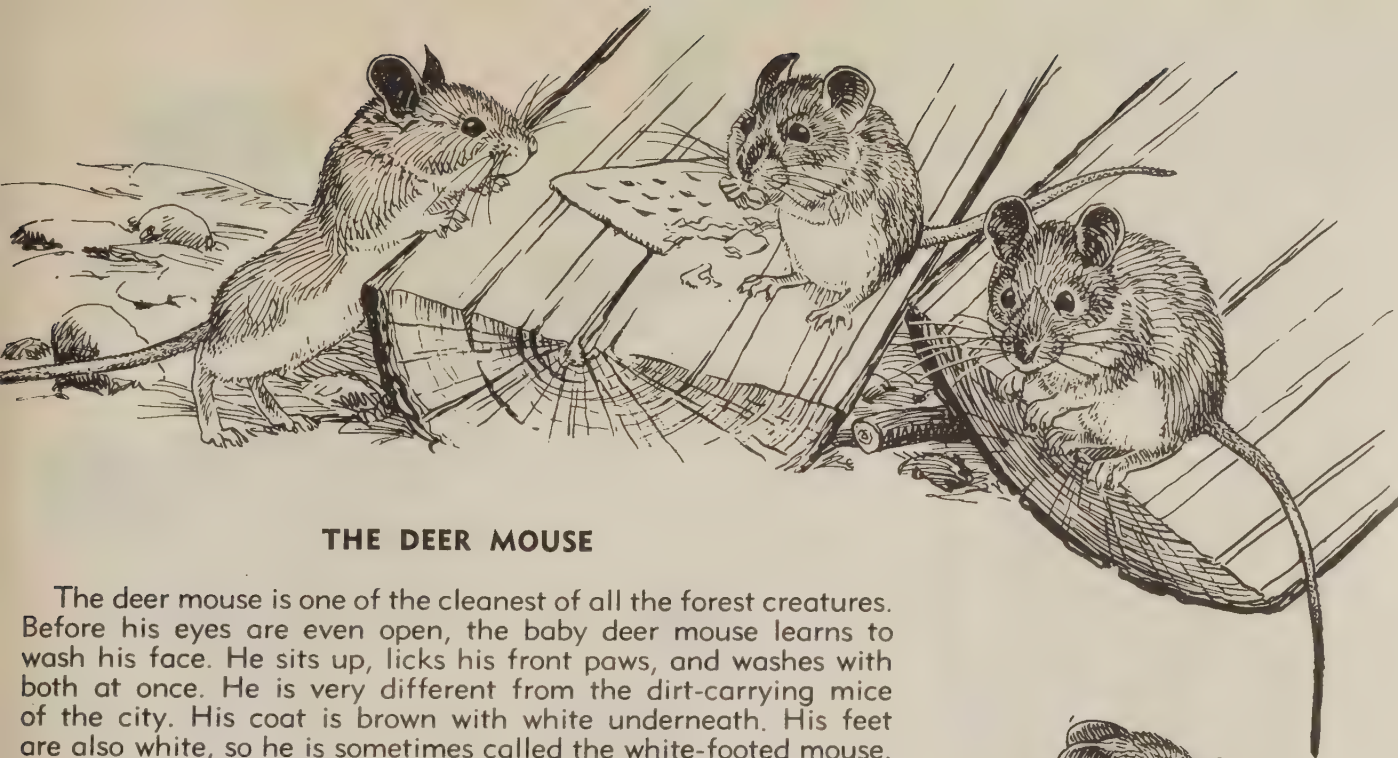
Down in the foothills lives the little cottontail. He gets his name from his fluffy white tail which looks very much like a ball of cotton. His light gray coat helps him hide among the brush where he has his burrow. All of his life may be spent in the same thicket, with its network of small paths. Here the babies are born in a nest lined with fur which their mother has pulled from her own coat to keep them warm. The cottontail can't rely upon speed alone for protection. Instead he doubles back on his own trail or "freezes." And when he does "freeze" he stays so completely motionless that he can hardly be seen at all.



THE PRAIRIE-DOG

Old-timers said that the the prairie-dog was "the barometer of the plains". They believed that when these little rodents were packing dirt around the mouths of their burrows, it would soon storm, even if the day was perfectly clear! Prairie-dogs seem always hungry, but they are nervous eaters, pausing every few seconds to sit up and look for enemies. When one is sighted, the prairie-dog sits up and gives a shrill whistle. Then all the others do the same and the sound is deafening. Once there were millions of prairie-dogs but because they ate the same food as cattle most of them have been poisoned. Prairie-dogs like the sun, but by sundown they all disappear underground, to await a new day.





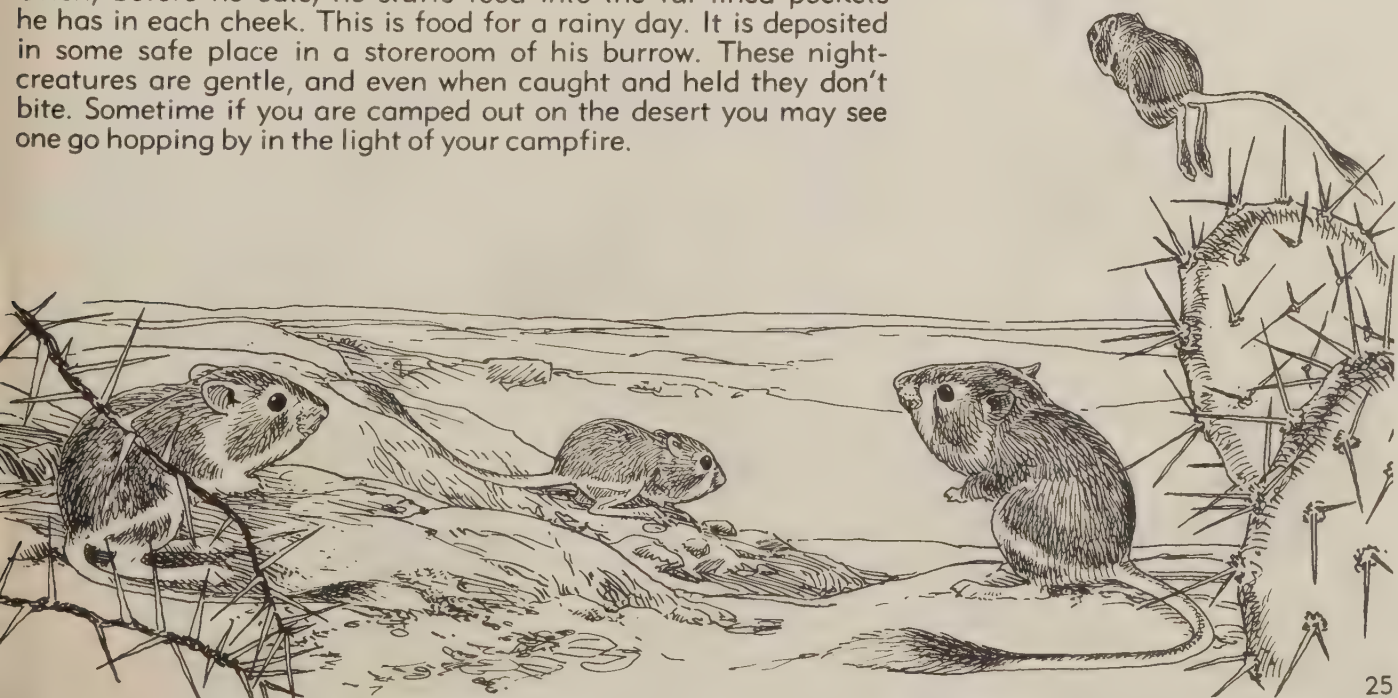
THE DEER MOUSE

The deer mouse is one of the cleanest of all the forest creatures. Before his eyes are even open, the baby deer mouse learns to wash his face. He sits up, licks his front paws, and washes with both at once. He is very different from the dirt-carrying mice of the city. His coat is brown with white underneath. His feet are also white, so he is sometimes called the white-footed mouse. He is active at night and his eyes are large to help him find his way in the dark. Perhaps a deer mouse will visit you sometime when you are camped in the woods. He likes your kind of food as well as the seeds upon which he usually feeds.



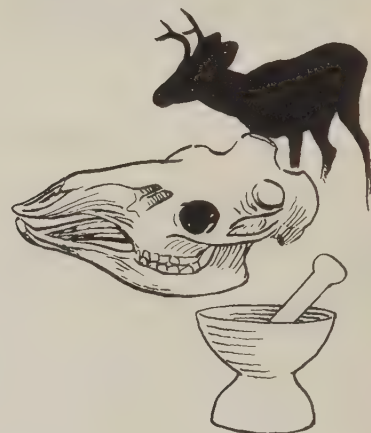
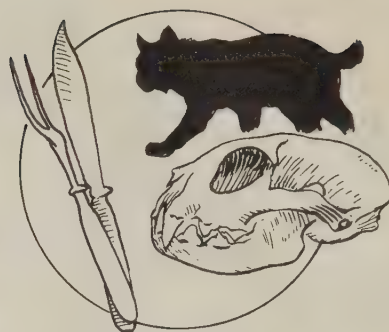
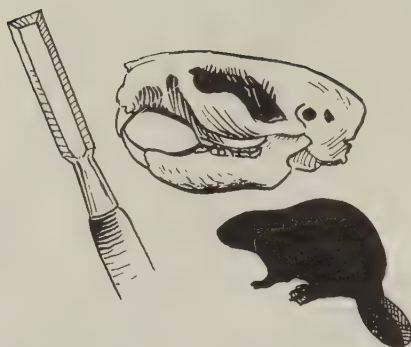
THE KANGAROO RAT

The kangaroo rat seldom uses his front feet because, like the animal for whom he is named, he hops on his long hind legs. He often goes six feet or more at one leap. This big-eyed rodent lives in dry, sandy areas. He probably goes his entire life without a drink of water, getting moisture from the plants which he eats. Often, before he eats, he stuffs food into the fur-lined pockets he has in each cheek. This is food for a rainy day. It is deposited in some safe place in a storeroom of his burrow. These night-creatures are gentle, and even when caught and held they don't bite. Sometime if you are camped out on the desert you may see one go hopping by in the light of your campfire.



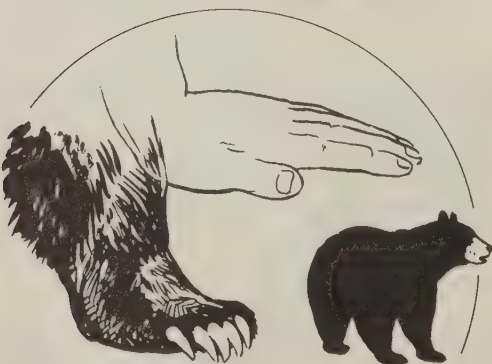
Teeth Are Like Tools

Mammals' teeth are well adapted to their different ways of life. We might compare them to common tools. Rodents have front teeth which are sharp and shaped like chisels. They are for gnawing. Carnivores such as cats can only tear and shred with their sharp teeth. Moles and shrews have many fine, pointed teeth used for gripping like a trap or a pair of pincers. The deer family have large, flat molars which are used for grinding. Our teeth are a combination of these.



Facts About Feet

Now let's talk about the different kinds of mammal feet. We might see how they resemble our own hands. The wing of the bat can hardly be called a "foot" but it has developed from a foot. Many of the bones are similar to the bones of our hands. Members of the dog family walk on what would be the first and second joints of our fingers, while deer walk on two fingertips. Bears and raccoons are flat-footed and walk palm-down.





THE BATS

Have you ever wished that you could fly? The only mammals which have developed their own bodies for flying are the bats. What now are wings were once their front feet. The finger bones have become long and slender and make a framework for the delicate membrane (skin) of the wing. In addition to being able to fly, bats have a built-in "radar" which helps them avoid hitting objects while in flight. They make a series of squeaks which are so high pitched that our ears can't hear them. These sounds bounce back from nearby objects and are picked up by their keen ears. In this way they find the route which they may follow safely. The common bats which come out of Carlsbad Caverns at dusk in summer are called Mexican freetail because the membrane on the tail does not extend to the tip. Bats are valuable as insect eaters. Tons of bat droppings, called "guano" have been mined at Carlsbad and other large caves. Guano is an important source of fertilizer, and used to be used for making gunpowder. Poisons sprayed on insects have also killed many bats which have eaten them. Bats can often be seen flying about at dusk, chasing their food. They are not blind, and they won't deliberately fly into ladies' hair!



THE SPOTTED SKUNK

Spotted skunks are much smaller than their striped relatives. They do all of their hunting at night. Meat and insects are their favorite foods but they will eat many other things. Their means of protection is the same as the striped skunk's except they do an interesting "handstand" as they spray. The great horned owl, the eagle, and the mountain lion are among the few animals that dare to hunt skunks. Spotted skunks are sometimes called "civet cats" but this name is not correct. Stories are told about skunks biting dogs and giving them rabies (or hydrophobia). Rabies are no more common among skunks than among many other wild and domestic animals. With their insect-eating habits, skunks are among our most valuable wild mammals.



THE STRIPED SKUNK

Almost everyone avoids the skunk. This handsome black and white animal defends himself with a bad-smelling fluid sprayed from small pockets beneath his tail. However, this means of defense is used only as a last resort. Skunks first stamp their front feet and try to frighten the other animal away. Most of his hunting is done at night, and insects make up more than half of his food. Holes among the rocks and hollow logs in brushy woods make natural homes for them. The babies are born in the spring-time and the mother soon teaches them to hunt. Perhaps someday you will see a parade of baby skunks walking single-file behind their mother as they all go in search of food.





THE LONG-TAILED WEASEL

The long-tailed weasel is well equipped for his way of life. His "streamlined" body makes it possible for him to move with great speed and to squeeze through narrow places. In summer his light yellow and tan coat blends well with the dry grass. In winter he becomes pure white except for his black-tipped tail. This white fur is often called "ermine." He is a killer. Most small animals and birds fear him and with good reason, for he will attack an animal much larger than himself. The weasel has few enemies but sometimes meets his equal when attacking a large snake. Mice and other rodents are a favorite food and for this reason weasels are useful animals to have around.



THE BADGER

A badger can dig faster than a man with a shovel, and he has the courage to stand off a whole pack of dogs. The badgers makes his living by digging-holes for shelter and after the smaller mammals which are his food. He is well-equipped for this kind of life—short and squat and flat, with long claws on his front feet. When he travels cross-country he seldom looks to the right or the left, but goes straight ahead, much like a four-legged army tank! In olden days the hair of the badger was used for making men's shaving brushes; sometimes it is used to trim ladies' coats today. In spite of their ferociousness when wild, badgers can be tamed, and they make good pets.





THE RACCOON

Raccoons love water. One of their scientific names means "one who washes," because they may dunk their food in water before eating. They are omnivorous and eat all sorts of things. Much of their food is found around their homes near the water. The front paws are like tiny hands and they use them well. This, combined with a great curiosity, sometimes makes the raccoon destructive when kept as a pet. Like bears, raccoons walk flatfooted and their tracks are easily recognized. The young come in the springtime and there may be from three to seven of them. You will know the raccoon when you see him by his robber-like mask.



THE RING-TAILED CAT

The ring-tail was often called the "miner's cat" because miners kept them as pets to catch rats and mice. Rodents are their favorite food but they also like birds and berries. Ring-tails are seldom seen because they are active only at night. Their bright eyes are large, to help them see in the darkness. The beautiful black and white banded tail is more than just an ornament. Not only does it help him in balancing when he climbs but it is used to keep him warm. He tucks his head beneath his chest and wraps his warm tail about him, becoming a fluffy ball of fur.





THE GRAY FOX

If you are lucky sometime you may see a gray fox running along the road. They are nocturnal, (noc-tur-nal) which means they are most active at night. Then is when you may catch a glimpse of one prowling through underbrush in search of rodents and other food. Gray foxes like to eat plants, but meat makes up more than half of their diet. Baby foxes are called "kits" and are born in March or April, often in a den among rocks or in a hollow tree. By the time they are five months old the kits are big enough to leave their parents. Gray foxes like to climb trees. This is unusual for members of the dog family.

THE BOBCAT

The bobcat looks much like a housecat, except for his pointed ears and short, bobbed tail. Most carnivorous animals hunt at night, but the bobcat also likes to forage (hunt food) in the daytime. Like all cats he sometimes catches birds, but he feeds mostly on ground squirrels, mice and other harmful rodents. These cats are found throughout Colorado but there are fewer in lower regions than in the mountains. The kittens are born in the springtime. The mother does not allow other animals, including the father bobcat, to come near. Though they don't really feel at home in trees, bobcats will climb when in danger. The creatures of the forest are often warned of a bobcat's approach by the screeching of the jays and other birds.



These animals are here because they have the wilderness in which to live. They have the lakes and streams from which to drink, and fresh, clean air to breathe.

Be gentle with your wildernesses and someday your children and your children's children can also know these animal friends.



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